

ACMI SCREEN EDUCATION

FILMMAKING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM: A BEGINNER'S GUIDE

POST-PRODUCTION

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Introduction

Simple digital editing is now possible in the classroom using a recent model computer and appropriate editing software. If you have these resources, you can manipulate shots and add post-production elements such as music, sound effects, dialogue (for animations), titles and credits, which can greatly enhance the final version of your film.

This article has some general background information on post-production. Please note that specific editing instructions depend on the software editing program you use. Software tutorials and program help facilities are very useful and there are many resources available online to help you get started.

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What Computer Do I Use?

Some very easy to use, basic editing software programs are now readily available for current model computers – both PC and Mac.

Apple computers come with *iMovie*, an easy to use editing package and built-in Firewire sockets for connecting a digital video camera to the computer.

To edit on PCs, you need a fast PC, a capture device such as Firewire and suitable editing software. Windows XP includes a basic video-editing package *Movie Maker 2*.

The most essential thing for any video editing is that your computer requires as much memory and hard disc storage space as you can afford.

Connecting your Camera to your Computer

Before you can start editing video, you need to ensure you have a capture device on your computer such as a Firewire, a piece of hardware that transfers information from the DV camera to your computer.

Editing

Editing is the process of selecting and arranging shots to tell the film's story. Audiences expect a film story to flow seamlessly and common editing techniques have become so familiar that we no longer notice the cut from one shot to the next.

Editing is used for the following purposes:

- **Developing the story** – selecting, arranging and pacing of both images and sound in a particular order to tell the film's story. The editor can make decisions that one particular shot for example will work better than another.
- **Evoking emotion** – editing shots in a particular style can shape our impression of a scene affecting the meaning, mood and our emotional reactions. For instance fast editing can build tension and a car chase or an action scene will almost always be edited in short abrupt cuts, whereas a romantic scene will be edited with longer shots and slow dissolves.
- **Controlling time** – editing controls the pace and timing of the film and how the narrative is revealed. Editing can be used to condense time or rearrange the story through flashbacks or flash-forwards.
- To **encourage viewers to identify** with particular characters – which character's point of view (POV) do we see most? Which character do we see most of? Who is in the close-up shots?



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Watch a few short clips eg, advertisements with the students and have them call out “cut” each time they see an editing point. Look for examples of the uses of editing outlined above and discuss.

To explore this further, give students a sequence of photos from a scene to organise (edit) in different ways, for example changing the narrative, changing the focus on a particular character, or experimenting using flashbacks or flash-forwards, and point of view.

The Editing Process

Editing is a time-consuming process so the careful planning of shots, keeping a good shoot record during the production, and identifying which take to use, are essential to keeping post-production time down and avoiding confusion.

A film can be edited in many different ways so an editor is constantly making decisions about how to move the story on.

To help students get started, demonstrate the process of joining two shots using a sample clip. Focus attention on the last frame of a clip and the cut to the first frame of the next clip. Do they work together? Try some other versions and compare the difference. Which works best? Why do you think so? Try some different examples and check and discuss with the group before they set out to do their own. Focus on Continuity and make sure that each shot relates to the shot before and after it.

Paper Edit

Point out that editors spend lots of time on these decisions. Encourage students to view all of their raw footage (or selected takes if they have kept good shoot records) and log or record a description and time code for each scene. This way they can select the shots they want and plan the order of shots on paper first by noting the in and out points. This helps to save editing time and also cuts down on the amount of memory required in the computer to store footage, as groups only download what they need.

See Worksheet 1 for an [Edit Record Worksheet](#).

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The Edit

1. Import the video into the computer. The shots will usually be arranged in **bins** in the program.
2. Arrange the shots in story order. View the shots or **clips**. Use the script to put the story together.
3. The main editing action is the **cut** where you join two pieces of film or videotape together.
4. You can also **trim** the front and end of a shot before cutting it with the next shot.
5. Shot **transitions** are special effects that can be occasionally inserted between two shots, usually to soften the join. Students might try some of these when editing their films but remember less is best. Transitions should only be used to enhance specific cuts. It is important to limit students to just a few of these transitions as the indiscriminate addition of exotic special effects is usually to the detriment of a film.



These are the only transitions used in most films:

- A **dissolve** overlaps two shots with one shot dissolving into the other.
- A shot can **fade** (usually to black or white).
- One shot can be **wiped** from the screen by another shot.

Once you are satisfied with the final edit of the footage it is time to add the final touches.

Special Effects

It is possible to add special visual and sound effects during editing but these are used rarely and only when they are necessary to help the story. These effects also increase the file size.

Sound Effects (SFX)

Extra sounds can be added during the editing process to enhance the story and to convey extra information to the viewer or to reinforce mood or action. Common SFX include rain, wind, explosions, footsteps, doors creaking open and exaggerated heartbeats.

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Titles and Credits

Add the Title to the film at the beginning, including the text, images and sound to introduce the story. Finalise an appropriate name for the film and include any production company details you may wish to have at this point.

At the conclusion of the film, add the Credit sequence with all the production details including crew, actors, acknowledgments and thank-yous.

Music

Music is used in film as a theme and to indicate mood, time, location, action and different characters. Music plays a powerful role in reinforcing the mood of a film and is used to great effect in influencing audience emotion. Music can change the whole meaning of a scene when used well. It can visibly affect all the other elements for example adding suspense, mystery, excitement and drama.

Music also establishes the style of the film or the genre. Try different pieces of music and notice the difference. The choice of music tells the viewer what sort of film they are watching.

Work with the beat of the music when adding music to your film. Select music that matches that emotion of a scene and use the natural beats of music and any narration to move from one shot to the next.

Copyright of music in particular is a huge issue with student films. It is best to encourage students from the earliest beginnings of filmmaking to use original music wherever possible. Films with un-cleared, copyrighted music cannot be played in public. For more information on copyright clearance go to the Victorian Department of Education and Training's Copyright Aware Website which is a source of news, ideas and resources for schools on responsible information use and copyright law.

Copyright Aware Website: www.copyrightaware.gov.au.

Following Up Clearance for Use of Non-Original Music

There are several steps you may need to follow:

- You need to find out who owns the rights to both the music and the lyrics in a recording.
- You need to write to the owners seeking written permission to use their composition in your work.
- You must attach a copy of their written permission to your work whenever you enter it into festivals or awards.

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Showing your Video

It is time to export your movie so it can be screened. You can show your movie in several different ways, for example you can record to a DVD, a video, a CD-Rom or for the web. You will need to follow the exporting instructions for the editing software that you used to edit your film.

Here are a few tips to make sure that this process goes smoothly:

- Check that all media, transitions and effects have been rendered in the timeline.
- Know that export settings will be different depending on what format you choose for your finished film. For example a movie clip exported to CD Rom has different export settings than a DVD project, or a video project.
- Check the settings (both for audio and vision) to make sure they are suitable for your playback purposes.

For further information on showing your video, go to Showtime. This page explores compression and how to choose the best format to show your video but watch out for the different international systems. The Australian DVD/Video frame rate is 25 frames per second for PAL systems. (The US uses 29 frames per second for their NTSC system.)

Showtime: <http://kidsvid.altec.org/showtime.html>

Publicity and Screening

Finally! The films are finished and now students may like to arrange a screening of their films for family and friends or the school community, to share and celebrate their success as filmmakers.

A big part of the producer's job in filmmaking is to ensure that the finished film has an audience. Discuss the marketing of films with the class and look at ways in which films are publicised – for example trailers, posters and film reviews. If possible obtain some advertising posters for past (suitable) films from your local cinema. Discuss and list with students the techniques used on these posters to promote the films. Look at how information is presented and the ways in which this is done including print, design, layout and images.

Have students design and make a poster for their film highlighting the message or story, and to “sell” it to the audience. Note that they must also include key information about the title, the plot, the setting, stars, when and where it is showing, and possibly add in some ‘critics’ comments or reviews. Display posters and discuss the techniques used by each group to get the message of the film across to other people.

Use these posters to promote the film screenings and invite special guests to attend.

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Student Assessment

Rubrics are an assessment tool that identifies and ranks the criteria for a piece of work. A rubric explicitly lists the things the student must have included or done to receive a certain score or rating. Generally rubrics specify the level of performance expected for several levels of quality. These levels of quality may be written as different ratings (e.g., Excellent, Good, Needs Improvement) or as numerical scores (e.g., 4, 3, 2, 1), which are then added up to form a total score.

Rubrics can help teachers and students define the expectations of 'quality' for each listed area. Teachers use the rubric to assess student work, students use it to work out exactly what they are supposed to do and to know how their work will be evaluated. Rubrics can also help students judge and revise their own work before handing in their assignments.

Possible areas for assessing students on the production of a film include:

- Concept
- Script
- Storyboard
- Equipment preparation
- Editing
- Sound and music
- Team work

Rubistar is a free online resource for teachers, which provides templates for making rubrics including filmmaking projects. This useful tool allows you to adapt and create your own rubrics very quickly. Go to <http://rubistar.4teachers.org/index.php> and select Multimedia.

Student Reflection and Self-Assessment

Reflection is the process of examining and interpreting an experience to gain new understanding. One-way to do this is to have students use the rubric to self assess their film project. Prompting reflection through an age and context appropriate questionnaire is also an effective way to encourage students to think about what they have experienced and learned as they developed their film project. Ideas for the focus include: team work and collaboration; the process undertaken to create the film; technical expertise gained; identifying challenges and successes; and thinking about what might work better next time. A simple "What worked best" and "What I would change" response is also a useful reflective tool.

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What Now?

Why not look around for some film competitions for your students to enter their films in or to make new films for. For example, find out about ACMI's (The Australian Centre for the Moving Image) national moving image competition for schools at http://www.acmi.net.au/screen_it.htm.

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Post-Production Resources Kit – Classroom Worksheets

Worksheet 1. Edit Record Worksheet

Shot	Time-code in	Time-code out	Instructions